



Van Hollen: Ryan budget is a 'total hoax'

By Mike Lillis - 03/12/13 03:16 PM ET

The House Republican 2014 budget proposal is a "hoax" that relies on Democratic legislative successes to balance the budget, Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) charged Tuesday.

Van Hollen, the senior Democrat on the House Budget Committee, noted that the GOP proposal – introduced just hours earlier by Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) – vows to repeal the Democrats' 2010 healthcare reforms, but leaves the savings benefits of that law in place.



He accused GOP leaders of cherry picking certain advantageous provisions – even provisions they've strongly opposed in the past – to get to balance in a decade, as they promised their conference late last year.

"It is a total hoax to say that you are repealing 'ObamaCare' and at the same time to say that you're balancing the budget in 10 years," Van Hollen said during a press briefing in the Capitol.

"Despite all the demagoguery in the last presidential campaign about the Medicare savings that we achieved as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), they've included all those savings in their budget," he added.

Ryan's plan would also repeal the ACA's efforts to extend healthcare coverage to low- and middle-income Americans, scrapping both the subsidized insurance exchanges and a sweeping expansion of Medicaid, Van Hollen pointed out. Combined with Ryan's proposal to shift Medicaid from an entitlement to a block-grant program, those changes would save the government more than \$2.5 trillion over a decade, according to House Budget Committee estimates.

Van Hollen accused the Republicans of preying on low-income people to make the math add up for political ends.

"This was a political target," he said.

Unveiled Tuesday, Ryan's budget plan is the latest salvo in Washington's partisan battle over deficit spending and the role of the federal government in the modern economy.

Senate Democrats are expected to offer a competing bill, complete with almost \$1 trillion in new tax revenues, on Wednesday. Van Hollen said he would introduce a third proposal – similar but not identical to the Senate bill – next week, and President Obama is expected to offer yet another plan early next month.

The contours of Ryan's budget mirror those found in his 2013 proposal, which didn't eliminate the deficit until almost 2040. His latest plan reaches balance in a decade.

"We are addressing the most predictable economic crisis in this country's history, this coming debt," Ryan said Tuesday in introducing his plan.

Van Hollen said Ryan was able to eliminate the deficit in a shorter window this year primarily because future healthcare costs have been estimated to rise at a slower clip than they were in the past.

"We, in our budget, will benefit from that as well," Van Hollen said.

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